Boost Foundation Stewardship Proposal

A Community Centered Approach

Abstract

The Boost Project has been a wild success. Millions of software engineers benefit from its high-quality libraries, it inspired dozens of ISO C++ enhancements, and hundreds of C++ developers have honed their skills interacting with its community. For 13 years, the Boost Steering Committee, which evolved into the Boost Foundation, has been responsible for managing Boost assets and resolving community deadlocks. Over the past several years, The C++ Alliance[1] has spent millions staffing Boost library development, building a new Boost website, and funding Boost marketing campaigns. They are now asking the Boost community to turn over all Boost infrastructure assets to their non-profit to manage, and create a new steering committee initially composed of members of their choosing. Their proposal is a departure from what we believe has made Boost successful and, in this counter-proposal, we highlight our philosophical and strategic differences.

Our Community Values

Our philosophical differences with the C++ Alliance stem from our values: transparency, consensus building, honoring governance process, volunteerism, and inclusivity. We believe these values are key to successful community building, and essential to Boost's success.

Transparency

We believe transparent leadership is fundamental to successful community building so much so that it is incorporated into our [mission statement](). Transparency builds trust, encourages accountability, promotes collaboration, and facilitates informed decision making. All Boost Foundation minutes are public; our work is open to inspection.

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[1] Mr. Vinnie Falco is the C++ Alliance's sole financial contributor and has been contributing to the nonprofit from his own personal funds. He serves as its Chair of the Board and Executive Director.

The C++ Alliance President and Executive Director states that ["Nothing good comes from publishing minutes"](). Its transparency reports exclude certain Boost-related initiatives that they would rather not be made public, such as an unannounced, and ultimately failed, attempt to purchase the boost.org domain from Beman Dawes's estate.

While there are benefits to keeping activities secret, such as avoiding delay-inducing public disagreements and occasional embarrassments, transparency makes for a healthier community. Losing it would fundamentally change the nature of Boost.

Consensus building

Slow progress is one of the criticisms levied against the Boost Foundation. Of course, a single individual can make decisions and take actions more quickly, but Boost's consensus building, community driven decision making process is one of its core strengths. It enables all voices to be heard, keeps the community invested, and leads to better outcomes.

Honoring governance process

We believe the existing governance processes (e.g. mailing list consensus and Boost Foundation authorities) should be followed even when it is difficult or we disagree with the outcomes. Different people doing contradictory things in the name of Boost is confusing and destructive.

The C++ Alliance has in several instances attempted to bypass these structures. A few examples are a) its intent to print Boost pamphlets with a logo that did not achieve consensus on the mailing list, b) launching a boost.io website without consulting the mailing list or the Boost Foundation, and c) creating and using a new Boost Twitter account without consulting the existing Twitter account owners or the Boost mailing list.

Bypassing sometimes lengthy and painful processes is a way to have impact sooner, but it demonstrates a disregard for the community and discourages participation

Volunteerism

To facilitate a thriving and growing community, we believe encouraging and celebrating volunteers is essential. Historically, Boost has depended on people dedicating their valuable free time to maintain servers, pay bills, contribute libraries, and write up reviews. Money, dedicated employees, and expensive marketing campaigns were not what made Boost successful in the past. Volunteers are our most valuable resource and keeping them requires an environment of appreciation and support.

The C++ Alliance hires and pays developers to contribute to Boost libraries. While this approach encourages quicker progress, it undermines the culture of philanthropy. When an organization is entirely volunteer-based, no one jeopardizes their compensation by expressing their opinion. Volunteerism encourages everyone involved to see themselves as part of the solution, contribute in whatever way they can, and freely voice their opinions and concerns.

Inclusivity

Inclusion, another value called out in our mission statement, is about making people of all stripes feel welcome, appreciated, and included in our community. Kindness, patience, and respect are necessary for outsiders, especially those outside typical developer stereotypes, to feel comfortable. We believe that success in today's society requires a strong and enforced Code of Conduct.

The 18-person C++ Alliance team consists of 0% women while 22% of software engineers in the United States are women. His proposed "Steering Committee" membership also lacks any female representation. While recognizing the value of experience, relying solely on traditional networks for leadership positions can unintentionally exclude talented women. This limits our potential for growth and innovation. The Boost Foundation Board is committed to sourcing talent from underrepresented groups to broaden our impact, introduce new ideas, and extend our influence in the community.

What we propose

The need for a high quality, peer-reviewed, Open Source, C++ library collection has never been greater. We believe the following proposal would increase engagement and trust within Boost.

1. Governance remains with the Boost Foundation which continues to serve as the legal entity representing Boost.
2. Engage in community building activities
   - Incorporate and enforce a strong code of conduct
   - Make an active effort to improve behavior on the mailing list
3. Improve relevance
   - Complete the CMake migration
   - Make an active effort to get those historically underrepresented to participate.
   - Consider adopting a modern communication platform, such as discourse
   - Consider putting the monolithic distribution in maintenance mode and require new libraries to be self contained.
4. Adopt governance best practices & increase transparency

- Clearly define all Boost roles and responsibilities
- Develop succession plans for each of these roles
- Create a process for replacing individuals who are no longer performing well in their roles.
- Set up term limits for officer positions
- Concentrate tangible and intangible assets (keys to the kingdom, etc.) in the Boost Foundation with elected officers being responsible for their administration.
- Ensure redundancy in all fundamental Boost operations
- Incorporate a call for nominations process when a Boost Foundation board seat opens up.
- Introduce all newly elected officers to the boost community via the mailing list
- Have at least 1 quarterly open board meeting where everyone in the community is invited to attend

FAQs

What problems is this proposal attempting to solve?

Declining community participation, confusion due to duplicated efforts (e.g. websites and social media accounts), process failures due to the unavailability of key people, and decreased relevance of the Boost project.

What risks are there with this approach and how can they be mitigated?

Regardless of which proposal is chosen, there is a risk that certain members of the community no longer feel comfortable with the direction of the Boost project. We will mitigate this risk by actively improving this proposal during the review process to increase consensus.

We may lose volunteers unwilling or unable to abide by a code of conduct.

Why did you inject politics into the mailing list by raising this issue?

We would have preferred not to have to bring this decision to the community - politics can be unpleasant and most people join Boost to be developers!

As noted in this proposal, the C++ Alliance has already generated replacement versions of many Boost Library assets - such as new logo, which they own, the new website, which is hosted on a non boost.org domain that they own, and a new Twitter account. The C++ Alliance is sponsoring CppCon in Boost's name and has created shirts and pamphlets with their new logo and references to their new domain.

We realized that if we as a community do not make an active choice, the C++ Alliance - with its considerable assets - will quietly consume the Boost brand by setting up duplicate or replacement versions of many of the Boost library assets.

Why can't the two organizations work together?

We would love to live in a world where the two organizations work hand in hand. We appreciate Mr. Falco's commitment and enthusiasm about the Boost project. Many efforts were made to open a line of communication between the Boost Foundation Board and the C++ Alliance. That is why the Foundation was upset by Mr. Falco's secret attempt to purchase the boost.org domain name. Given the open line of communication, we expected to have been involved in something so important. Alliance leadership told us we were intentionally excluded because ownership of the boost.org domain name would give the Alliance the ability to bypass the Board in all future decision making processes. Ideally, we would like the C++ Alliance to continue contributing to the Boost project while respecting the existing governance structures. We are hoping that if the community decides to move forward with this proposal, the C++ Alliance and its employees will continue contributing in a way that respects the community's consensus on systems and practices.

Boost Foundation Board of Directors

Kristen Shaker—Chair of Board of Directors

Kristen spent many years at Google on the C++ Core Libraries Team. The team is responsible for making the C++ portion of Google's code base as extensible, maintainable, and understandable as possible via start of the art refactoring tools, targeted guidance, and documentation on complex C++ topics. She is heavily involved as an organizer in CppCon and C++Now.

David Sankel—Executive Director

David Sankel is a Principal Scientist at Adobe and an active member of the C++ Standardization Committee. His experience spans microservice architectures, CAD/CAM, computer graphics, visual programming languages, web applications, computer vision, and cryptography. He is a frequent speaker at C++ conferences and specializes in large-scale software engineering and advanced C++ topics. David's interests include dependently typed languages, semantic domains, EDSLs, and functional programming. He is the project editor of the C++ Reflection TS, Executive Director of the Boost Foundation, and an author of several C++ proposals including pattern matching and language variants.

Zach Laine

Zach Laine has been using C++ in industry for 15 years, focusing on data visualization, numeric computing, games, generic programming, and good library design. He finds the process of writing bio blurbs to be a little uncomfortable.

Glen Fernandes

Glen Joseph Fernandes is a C++ enthusiast who has worked at Intel and Microsoft.

He is the author of the Boost Align library, a major contributor to the Boost Smart Pointers and Core libraries, and has also contributed to several other Boost libraries (including Mp11, Type Traits, IO, Functional, Circular Buffer, Dynamic Bitset, Multi Array, and more).

He is a contributor to the ISO C++ Standard and has at least four features adopted for the new C++20 standard (P0674R1, P0653R2, P1020R1, P1357R1).

He lives with his wife Caroline and daughter Aeryn in the US, graduated from the University of Sydney in Australia, and before all that, lived in New Zealand.

Jeff Garland

Jeff Garland has over 30 years of experience working on large-scale distributed software projects across various domains, including telecommunications, industrial control, satellite systems, and finance. He has extensive expertise in developing high-performance C++ network servers and data distribution frameworks. A Boost library contributor since 2000, Jeff developed Boost.date_time, served as a review manager, and mentored in Google Summer of Code. He holds a Master's in Computer Science from Arizona State University and a Bachelor's in Systems Engineering from the University of Arizona. Jeff is the Principal Consultant at his own company, CrystalClear Software, Inc., and assistant chair of the Library Working Group for the C++ standards committee.

Inbal Levi

Inbal Levi is an embedded software engineer with a passion for high performance.She is one of the organizers of CoreCpp conference and CoreCpp user group.

She's also a member of ISO/IEC JTC1/SC22/WG21 (the C++ Standards Committee), and among the founders of the Israeli NB Mirror committee.

Peter Dimov

Peter Dimov is a seasoned C++ developer and prominent contributor to the Boost C++ libraries. He has authored and maintained several key libraries, including Boost.Bind, Boost.SmartPtr, and

Boost.Mp11, among others. Peter is also responsible for important components of the C++11 standard, such as shared_ptr and bind. Additionally, he wrote and maintains the Boost CMake build infrastructure.

Bob Stegall

Bob is a Principal Engineer with GliaCell Technologies. He's been working almost exclusively in C++ since discovering the second edition of The C++ Programming Language in a college bookstore in 1992. The majority of his career was spent in medical imaging, where he led teams building applications for functional MRI and CT-based cardiac visualization. After a brief detour through the worlds of DNS and analytics, he's now working in the area of distributed stream processing. Bob is a relatively new member of the C++ Standardization Committee, and launched a blog earlier this year to write about C++ and topics related to software engineering. He holds BS and MS degrees in Physics, is an avid cyclist, and lives in fear of his wife's cats.

Matthew Guidry

Matthew Guidry is a passionate software engineer and the newest member of the Boost Board, having joined in 2024 at CppNow. He is a Principal Software Engineer at Cadence Design Systems.

Michael Caisse

Michael Caisse started using C++ with embedded systems over 30 years ago. He continues to be passionate about combining his degree in Electrical Engineering with elegant software solutions and is always excited to share his discoveries with others.

Reference Information

- [Boost Foundation Website](#)
- [Boost Foundation Bylaws](#)